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SPECIAL ANALYSES

POLAND: Role of the Church

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The prolonged martial law crisis has weakened the Church's ability to mediate between the regime and society. The Church has lost its preferred role as "honest broker" facilitating dialogue between Solidarity and the state, and the hierarchy disagrees over the proper course to follow. The Church's concern about possible violence will tend to make it appear to support regime efforts to maintain control. [REDACTED]

Since the imposition of martial law, the Church has retained its moral authority, organizational structure, and popular support. The Church's criticism of martial law restrictions has enhanced its traditional image as defender of human rights and critic of excesses by the state. Its involvement in aid distribution has intensified its bonds with the population and has demonstrated that it remains the only reliable link with the West. [REDACTED]

Despite its unrivaled moral authority, however, the Church lacks the power to guide developments. Some leaders of the Church fear that government and party hardliners have enough momentum to threaten its access to the media and the freedom to teach catechism. [REDACTED]

The leaders also are frustrated at their failure to bring party and Solidarity moderates together and their inability to prevent dangerous outbursts such as the one last week in Gdansk. The Church's influence probably is weakest among young people--the group most likely to engage in violent resistance. [REDACTED]

Ambivalence Toward Solidarity

Although the Church is attempting to get the ban on Solidarity lifted and its rights restored, it knows that the regime will never consent. Furthermore, many in the

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Church who earlier counseled caution to Solidarity probably now partly blame the union--and especially its intellectual advisers--for the continuing crisis. [REDACTED]

Archbishop Glemp seems frustrated with the intransigence of Solidarity leaders, particularly Lech Walesa. Continued Church pressure on Solidarity to scale down its demands and to persuade Walesa to talk with the regime could put it directly at odds with union leaders. [REDACTED]

Differences Within the Church

There is basic agreement within the Church establishment on the need to avoid violence, to ease martial law restrictions, and to renew the union-government dialogue. At the same time, however, there are considerable differences over tactics. [REDACTED]

The tense situation--especially the danger that unrest will lead to more repression--makes any course of action risky. The most difficult calculation for Church leaders is gauging the amount of pressure to put on the regime. [REDACTED]

Archbishop Glemp has adopted a middle-of-the-road position. He believes that the Church has to take a strong stand against the regime's repressive measures. He also is afraid to undercut Premier Jaruzelski, whom he views as a moderate under siege by hardliners. Glemp has often supported Jaruzelski and has opposed US sanctions. [REDACTED]

The Archbishop, however, lacks the authority of the late Cardinal Wyszynski, and his tactics have been challenged by other prelates. The more moderate among them believe that tough statements are counterproductive, while the more conservative believe the regime will move toward accommodation only under increased pressure. [REDACTED]

Pope John Paul II probably will discuss these differences with Glemp and several high-ranking bishops when they arrive in Rome today. The delegation includes two prelates who represent the contending viewpoints. [REDACTED]

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The Pope is likely to endorse continuing Glemp's strategy, perhaps with some modifications. The Pontiff would be reluctant to run roughshod over his former colleagues, however, and the resultant decision may be ambiguous enough to allow for continued differences of approach at the local level. [REDACTED]

Such differences need not impede seriously the Church's ability to act in a unified fashion in Warsaw. Local clashes between the Church and regime, however, may become issues of contention at the national level. [REDACTED]

Outlook

Despite internal disputes over tactics, concern in the Church over violence and the possibility of Soviet intervention will prompt its leaders to take positions that in effect support the regime's pacification efforts. Its standing with the populace, however, is not likely to be damaged, and the Church will continue to be in a position to encourage any eventual political accommodation. [REDACTED]

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